



# Ross County

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EXTENSION

## 2008 County Highlights

### Strengthening Families and Communities

- The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) project reached 98 individuals in 2008. This project offers “Eating Smart Being Active” in an eight-week series to limited income parents of children. Ninety-six percent of participants showed improvement in food resource management practices in pre versus post assessments. These practices help families stretch their food dollars and run out of food less often.
- Diabetes cost Ross County \$52,743,772 each year according to the Ohio Department of Health. Evaluations from Dining with Diabetes, the three-week cooking school conducted by OSU Extension, show that 98% of the 25 participants from 2008 reported learning new information as a result of the class. A 1% reduction in diabetes costs in Ross County would equal a \$527,437 savings each year.
- The Family Nutrition Program (FNP) reached 563 Ross County residents during 2008. Indirect contacts were also made with 6,121 residents through staffed displays or newsletters. Many of these indirect contacts were made at local food banks or soup kitchens where they are reporting higher numbers due to a poor economy and higher utility and grocery costs. These community groups report that nutrition, budgeting, and food safety information that their clients receive from FNP is an important service to the county. The Ross County FNP Summer Food and Fitness Program conducted educational programs at eight summer feeding sites with 786 children during the summer of 2008. The children receiving free lunches learned a different nutrition, food safety, or physical fitness lesson each week.

### Advancing Employment and Income Opportunities

- Life Style Farms are increasing in number throughout southern Ohio. Many of these new landowners have the financial resources and land but have little or no experience in farming or are several generations removed from agriculture. The New and Small Farm College addresses the educational needs of this new lifestyle audience. The nine-week introductory course was attended by 117 small farm operators from 21 Ohio counties, and 67.86% of the audience were first-time participants of an OSU Extension program. Ninety-four (94%) of landowners indicated that lifestyle was their motivation for farm ownership. Participants rated the

overall program an 8.75 out of a 10 point scale (1 = poor and 10 = excellent). Ninety-nine percent noted they would recommend this program to other landowners. One participant said, “This class has helped me, a non-farmer before, to learn and grow in knowledge. I wish I could have taken it the first year we bought the farm; it could have stopped a lot of mistakes and wrong spending not only in money but in time. Wish it could be longer.”

- 145 Ross County and Chillicothe city employees participated in a 12-week fitness challenge in 2008. Post-program evaluation showed that 97% of participants were continuing to exercise as a result of the program. This Worksite Wellness programming is conducted through a cooperative effort with the Ross County Health District, OSU Extension, and various other county and city departments. These efforts and other health programs offered in Ross County contributed to Ross County being awarded a Gold Award from Healthy Ohio. A Worksite Wellness Conference that was attended by 70 employees from 34 worksites (representing over 10,500 additional employees) was also offered by this group. Post-conference evaluations show that these worksites are now offering Health Risk Assessments, health fairs, and better vending for employees.
- Farm Business Management will play a significant role in the success of the next generation of farm operators. 24 young couples attended farm business related sessions to enhance their skills in business transfer, estate planning, tax management, and finance and business management. The 24 young farm couples currently represent estates in excess of \$48,000,000. This business and estate equity is crucial to our local economy in terms of disposable income as well as how this wealth passes to the next generation. OSU Extension is teaching young farm families life long business and financial management skills.

### Enhancing Agriculture and the Environment

- Row Crop Economics continue to challenge production management decisions in corn, soybeans, and wheat enterprises. The application and use of fungicides in row crops is challenging best management practices in terms of return on investment. The use of fungicides in row crops can cost growers \$22 to \$30 per acre. In Ross County this represents \$3,540,000 in additional input

costs to growers. Commodity prices, disease pressure, and crop yield determines what economic return, if any, will be realized by the addition of a fungicide to the production phase of grain. On-farm research allows growers to evaluate the economic benefit of fungicides to the row crop enterprise.

## Preparing Youth for Success

- Youth at Risk, The Lighthouse Youth center is home to approximately 70 juvenile offenders. Youth at this facility make a commitment to receive their general education diploma while serving their sentence for their respective juvenile offenses. Juvenile offenders completing this program have better than a 90% chance of not returning to prison. The following was written by one of the participants in the Lighthouse Garden and describes in his words the impact of the Garden Club: “The Gardening Club was something new to Lighthouse Youth Center Paint Creek this year, and I am going to tell you how it was from my eyes. When I first went, I thought, ‘I’m just about to learn how to plant some flowers.’ However, when I actually experienced it, (It was like I never knew anything about any of this stuff except that they came in cans when I was home.) Some of the things that I learned while I was going were how to pick a string bean which was by the stem of the bean and that sweet corn is really good when it isn’t cooked but even better when it is cooked. I also learned when and how to pick the watermelon, squash, cucumber, cantaloupe, two different types of tomatoes, peppers, string beans, beets, pumpkins, and radishes. I know from my experience never underestimate how fun or educational something can be until you’ve tried it. I know that if it wasn’t for the volunteer gardener Dave who started it and spent a lot of time to teach us how to plant, pick, and grow good food, I wouldn’t know what I learned today. So I really appreciate the time that he spent with us and hope he can teach a lot of others with the same generosity as he did when he taught us. It inspired me to want to go home and start a gardening thing to teach others the fundamentals and responsibilities that myself and others was taught by Dave. Thank You Dave!”
- 4-H in the Classroom utilized curriculum-based methods of delivery to educate and reach out to new audiences of over 1,200 youth in area schools. The goals

of 4-H in the classroom are to offer school enrichment programs that meet the needs of students and teachers for quality, hands-on learning experiences; assist students in gaining knowledge and skills through science-based programming and hands-on activities; valuable life skills; an understanding and meeting academic content standards. The Fishy Science curriculum was used with seventeen classes of K–3rd grade in one area school. Program evaluations showed 510 students (all new to 4-H) learned responsibility, improved their understanding of life cycles, fish facts, and behavior. Students utilized creative thinking by making up conversations the fish would have with each other and writing stories from a fish perspective. Teachers reported students with behavioral issues were calmer and more cooperative when fish tanks (used to support the lessons) were added to their classrooms. 100% of teacher evaluations reported “strongly agreed” that the student activities and lessons in Weather Together, Breads of the Harvest and Fishy Science curricula helped students understand science concepts; students were interested in the lessons; lessons were easy to follow and kits were beneficial. Teachers reported they will use the kits again and want Extension to continue to furnish hands-on kits and curriculum for various science topics.

- The Ross County 4-H CARTEENS program educated 220 first-time juvenile traffic offenders through Juvenile Traffic Offenders Seminars (JTOS) in partnership with the Juvenile Court and the Ohio State Highway Patrol, Chillicothe Post. In Ohio there were 267 fatal crashes and 7,255 injury crashes where excessive speed and failure to control were the leading causes of the crashes. Speed-related crashes cost an average of \$144 per person. Excess speed contributes to both the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes which amount to about 18% of cost of driving to the county. Approximately 50% of youth in the JTOS course had speed violations, 46% violations related to lack of control and distractions. The economic impact to the county is \$14,400 for speed-related violations alone. 54% of JTOS participants reported they would reduce their speed, 48% reported they would decrease their distractions, and 90% reported their improved understanding of traffic laws, the importance of seatbelt usage, and improvement in overall driving as a result of the classes.

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